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# BEXHILL RAIL ACTION GROUP

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## Network Rail South East Route: Sussex Area Route Study Consultation

Email: [SussexRouteStudy@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:SussexRouteStudy@networkrail.co.uk)

Dear Sir/Madam

### **South East Route: Sussex Area Route Study Consultation – Submission by Bexhill Rail Action Group (BRAG)**

The Committee welcomes this opportunity to respond to aspects of this consultation which are relevant to Bexhill rail users.

#### **Paragraph 1.4 Route Studies**

The Study was completed before Network Rail's Sussex and Kent Routes were combined into a South East Route. One effect of this is that the consideration of traffic to and from **Hastings** is largely **absent**. Hastings and Bexhill have a combined population of over 120,000 which is forecast to grow by at least 30,000 in the next decade and a half. This conurbation generates considerable traffic via the East Coastway route not just to London, but also Gatwick Airport and Brighton, and onwards to the West Coastway. This traffic will grow still further during the output period of the Study.

BRAG's view is that the Study **must** consider Hastings as an origin and destination on the East Coastway before reaching any definitive conclusion as to interventions and improvements on this route.

#### **Table 3.3 – Long Distance Conditional Outputs**

BRAG has consistently advanced the importance of reducing 'generalised' journey times between Bexhill and the destinations of Gatwick and London as these are important for many local residents. However such consideration is absent from the Study, with only Eastbourne (CO15) meriting any mention.

BRAG would insist that reduced 'generalised' journey times from Bexhill and Hastings **must** be included as additional important Long Distance Conditional Outputs.

BRAG observes an excessive focus in the Study as to the provision of future rail capacity into and out of London (such as Table 3.1 – Peak Capacity Conditional Outputs), and the avoidance of overcrowding on these routes; to the exclusion of improvements and interventions elsewhere in the area, including East Sussex.

#### **Table 3.30 – Rail connectivity to Airports Conditional Outputs**

BRAG fully supports the commitment to provide adequate connectivity for passengers travelling to and from Gatwick Airport but fails to see how the Study addresses this in relation to Bexhill and the East Coastway. Local travellers currently experience lengthy and inconvenient journeys due to the need to detour in and out of Eastbourne, **and** the

additional time penalty created through splitting and attaching at Haywards Heath throughout much of the day.

A transformational approach to reducing journey times for all East Coastway passengers east of Eastbourne to Gatwick Airport and beyond, would involve construction of the **Willingdon Chord**, which would allow some trains to avoid reversing at Eastbourne: BRAG believes that this intervention should be **a mandatory requirement for the construction of a second runway at Gatwick Airport.**

**Additional Conditional Output (no existing reference found)**

BRAG further notes that the Study avoids discussion of potential through services between the East and West Coastway. The Sussex Coast is an economic zone in its own right, but currently, travel along the greater Sussex Coast is inconvenient and lengthy due to the need to change trains at Brighton, and reverse at Eastbourne.

BRAG proposes that these traffic flows should be reflected in the Study by a formal Conditional Output detailing the requirement for **more convenient and faster journeys along the Sussex Coast.** There may be no easy solution to connection requirements at Brighton, but reconstruction of the Willingdon Chord (as above) would be a valuable step towards a more holistic solution.

Yours faithfully

Hugh Sharp  
Chairman, Bexhill Rail Action Group  
January 2015